

Speech given by  
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Administration on Aging  
on  
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at  
the South Carolina Whitehouse Conference on Aging  
in  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

- Good evening! I am so pleased to be here in South Carolina.
  
- Thank you, Jane, for that kind introduction. And thank you to
  - Lieutenant Governor Bauer
  - Nela Gibbons, and
  - Kay Mitchellfor inviting me to be here today.
  
- This is an exciting and busy time for the aging network as we explore new and better ways to serve there growing elder population in this country.

- Talking about growing elderly populations, South Carolina now ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the Nation in elder growth. While this might seem like a challenge-- the opportunities are boundless and this conference is a very important venue that you can use to create a blue print for the future.

- As with South Carolina the national stage also has tremendous opportunities to begin to address these challenges now, including The White House Conference on Aging with all of its public input, the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and the implementation of the Medicare Modernization Act.
- I know the White House Conference on Aging will play a critical role in how we shape aging policy and steer us in the right direction for addressing the preferences of all older Americans.
- The 2005 White House Conference on Aging is the first to have a mandate to focus on the aging of today and tomorrow, which includes the 78 million baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964.

- And by adopting the WHCOA theme for this conference today,  
“The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action.”  
It allows all of us to capture where we are in the aging  
community and where we are going.
- We are moving from awareness to action.
- This Administration is aware of the new challenges and issues  
that must be addressed for our seniors today and tomorrow.  
And we are taking action.
- The Administration, through the New Freedom Initiative, is  
taking a fresh approach to ensure that our systems of long-term  
care can better address the needs and preferences of the new  
generation of seniors today.

- With our baby boomers now reaching retirement age at rapid pace, we have great opportunities, not only to meet their service needs but to build a system that allows them to remain in control of their health and their lives as they age.
- We have a tremendous window of opportunity with these challenges.

And it is time to lead.

- We are very familiar with South Carolina's state plan for aging and I am pleased to find that it is consistent with where we are and where we are headed.
- South Carolina's aging agenda exemplifies many of the major areas the Administration and HHS are targeting.

- Your plans emphasize consumer directed care, health promotion and disease prevention programs, simplifying access to information on long-term care options and empowering our seniors so they have more choices and control of their futures.
- I would like to highlight how some of your programs parallel the agenda of the Administration and the Administration on Aging.
- South Carolina acknowledges that seniors with long term needs should have more choice and control.
- In your state plan you highlight your Family Caregiver program as a program that is not only consumer directed but offers seniors choices on long-term living needs.
- It gives AAAs, providers and families the **flexibility** on where an individual may receive care and the kinds of services they wish to receive.

- AoA and this Administration are determined to assure that seniors have more choices in where they want to live, and how they want to live.
- This will be a priority in the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, allowing dollars to flow in a more flexible and targeted manner and to advance key long-term care systems change.
- The principles that we should pursue in a modernized Older Americans Act should 1) empower people to make informed decisions and give them more control in their long term care; 2) enable people at high risk of nursing home placement to remain at home and 3) help people adopt healthy lifestyles that will reduce their risk of chronic disease, disability and injury.

- We already know South Carolina actively promotes evidence-based prevention programs geared towards improving health and quality of life for older persons.
- Your Senior Project Information Program, which has funded eleven projects to implement evidence-based programs to improve health for seniors and your PACE senior Project, (People with Arthritis can Exercise) offers training and consultation on arthritis and risk factors for arthritis.
- I also want to commend the Lieutenant Governor and the state legislature and the physicians here today in taking a leadership role in the Geriatric Physician bill “loan forgiveness program”
- We understand it has gone through the House and on its way to the Senate--- and you are the only state which has done this.



- Should this pass you will be the only state in the Nation to give incentives for geriatric training in medical school.
- For our part, the Administration on Aging and the Department of Health and Human Services are proud to highlight the YOU CAN! Campaign, a national partnership geared to mobilize communities and create awareness on the importance of good nutrition and physical activity.

- This campaign aims to increase the number of older adults that are active and healthy. We are proud to say that AoA has reached its objective for this program much earlier than expected.
- We now have 2011 partners who have joined our campaign and are working with us to help seniors stay healthy, longer.
- South Carolina's "SC Access Plus" exhibits an easier and more efficient way for seniors to obtain information on eligibility and their long-term living choices.
- In Sept 2003, the SC SUA received a grant from Administration on Aging and Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services for this program. The "SC Access Plus" serves as a one-stop entry point for adults and persons with physical disabilities so they may receive information on long-term care living options.

- The “SC Access Plus” is a part of a broader ADRC initiative, which is a joint project effort of the Administration on Aging and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare.
- This program will prepare us to address the system challenges we face with the future of long-term care in developing and implementing “one stop shop” access to information and individualized counseling on long-term care choices, as well as streamlined eligibility determination for all publicly funded programs.
- Our goal is to have these ADRCs serve as a visible and trusted place where people of all ages, disabilities, or incomes may receive information on available long-term support options.
- As South Carolina moves forward with the “SC Access Plus” initiative you are paving the way - creating an easier path for seniors and their families to access home and community-based alternatives.



- Both AoA and South Carolina are addressing ways to re-direct more public and private funding to support health promotion activities, as well as to create an environment that encourages greater personal responsibility and choice.
- I feel it is important to also highlight the inclusion of transportation services in our aging agendas and how they enhance the lives of seniors nationwide.
- Both AoA and South Carolina know that transportation assistance helps seniors to stay independent, longer.
- South Carolina now has implemented their first Department of Transportation coordination project, located in the Lower Savannah Region.
- With a grant by Federal Transit Administration (FTA), you are running a routing and scheduling system demonstration project.

- You can say its South Carolina's own transportation systems change blue print!
- Both AoA and FTA are working with South Carolina to further explore transportation models for older adults and all human service groups. So far, tangible outcomes have shown a 600% increase in ridership in the first two months of service.
- That is really encouraging!
- These programs in South Carolina are only a few of the many aging programs that are making real the Federal aging policy agenda.
- It is encouraging and exciting for me to see that South Carolina is on a positive track towards addressing the needs of our seniors today and those soon entering retirement age.

## **Medicare Modernization Act**

- We are also moving from awareness to action as we implement the Medicare Modernization Act.
- Currently there are over 42 million Medicare beneficiaries nationally including over 607,000 in South Carolina. We want to commend the Aging Network, the SHIPS, AARP and volunteers—all of you played a role in helping seniors enroll in transitional assistance.
- Now we seek your help again with the new benefit taking effect this year.
- CMS recognizes the value of the Aging Network, and particularly its capacity to reach elderly people where they live in the community. AoA and CMS have established a powerful partnership to ensure that seniors are aware of the many new benefits offered by the Medicare program, and have the information they need to take action to obtain them.

- It is so important that the people we serve – particularly the frail, the homebound – are able to take advantage of these benefits.
- Two weeks ago, I issued an alert throughout the Network asking for your assistance with these clients, our neediest. I am asking you to take special care to make sure that your providers are able to respond to their critical need for information and assistance.
- Partners now have the opportunity to register for the types of activities they wish to participate in through an on-line tool on the AoA website.
- These activities include information dissemination, hosting events, and providing one-on-one advice. These partnership activities are natural to us, and I am proud to say that, in just two weeks, we have received commitments from almost 600 partners.

### **Reauthorization**



- We are moving from awareness to action through the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.
- I believe very strongly that the upcoming reauthorization is the premier opportunity of AoA and all of our partners in the Network to modernize and adapt the Act to prepare for the aging of the Baby Boom Generation and to create a new vision of long-term care that reflects all of our hopes for the future.
- The Older Americans Act has always been a tool for us in advancing changes in the larger system of care.
- And now 40 years after its enactment, we have a tremendous opportunity to strengthen our leadership role in a modernized long-term care system.
- The Act can give us an opportunity to better empower the elderly and disabled to make informed choices and to provide the means for them to exercise those choices.

- The Act can also help us to empower middle-aged individuals to plan ahead for their long-term care.
- The Act can help us better target long-term care resources to high-risk individuals.
- And it can be the tool for building prevention into our long-term care services and systems at the community-level.
- Together, we have built the foundation of our nation's system of home and community-based care. Let us work together on the Reauthorization to strengthen that system on behalf of all older people.

### **Secretary Leavitt**

- We have a renewed energy to act because of the new leadership within HHS.

- We have a new vision for HHS that is grounded in the aggressive agenda the President has set for all of us. He believes that we can transform our health care system, so informed consumers own their own health records, their own health savings, and their own health insurance.
- He believes we can be a nation where families embrace the power of prevention and wellness. Where fewer people get sick because they take action to stay healthy. And where seniors and people with disabilities get long-term care WHERE THEY WANT IT!

## **Conclusion**

- In South Carolina, you are leading the charge. You are well on your way from awareness to action.
- As we move forward to meet the challenges of the future, we must never lose sight of our primary mission and core values that are inherent in the Older Americans Act.
- Our seniors in South Carolina and all over this country offer a wealth of knowledge, skills and abilities. Through volunteerism civic engagement and employment, these older adults contribute to the quality of life for other seniors, families and their communities.
- And we can't do this alone.
- The public sector needs to engage the private sector just like South Carolina has done.

- I commend you for your support but most importantly for your key involvement and partnership with the Aging Network in designing the blue print for the future.
- With this, it is vital we keep our focus on addressing the opportunities in front of us and on the individual consumer.
- I am confident the Aging Services Network of South Carolina will not only meet the challenges of today but is ready to take on the future.